INTEROPERABILITY

SNMP Users Stay Tuned With *The Simple Times*

The Simple Network Management Protocol has caught on like wildfire, evolving from a small task force of a few people to become the industry standard for network management. One reason that SNMP caught on so quickly is that the developers worked together, putting aside vendor-specific differences to come up with standards that would benefit the whole community.

Evidence of that community spirit is found in *The Simple Times*, a new kind of publication edited by Marshall Rose and written by a group of volunteers. It is distributed free in a variety of formats.

The newsletter is published bimonthly and emphasizes high-quality technical material. The premier issue, for example, contains a refereed article by Greg Satz of Cisco Systems Inc. This excellent article discusses bulk data retrieval with SNMP and advocates the use of the TCP transport protocol as a high-volume alternative to User Datagram Protocol-based datagrams.

Each issue includes an industry comment by Rose and several columns. Steve Waldbusser, author of the most widely used public domain SNMP implementation, discusses the question of topology discovery, for example. In another column, Jeffrey Case—"Dr. SNMP"—brings his earthy Tennessee humor to questions such as "Should a management station be able to reset the counters in an agent to zero?"

The back of the newsletter contains columns on the current status of standards, tracking the progression of the management information bases ranging from switched multimegabit data services to T1 lines to Fiber Distributed Data Interface, AppleTalk, and Open Shortest Path First routing. The current status of working groups shows which MIBs will soon enter the pipeline. And a list of recent publications and future activities keeps people tuned into the SNMP community's activities.

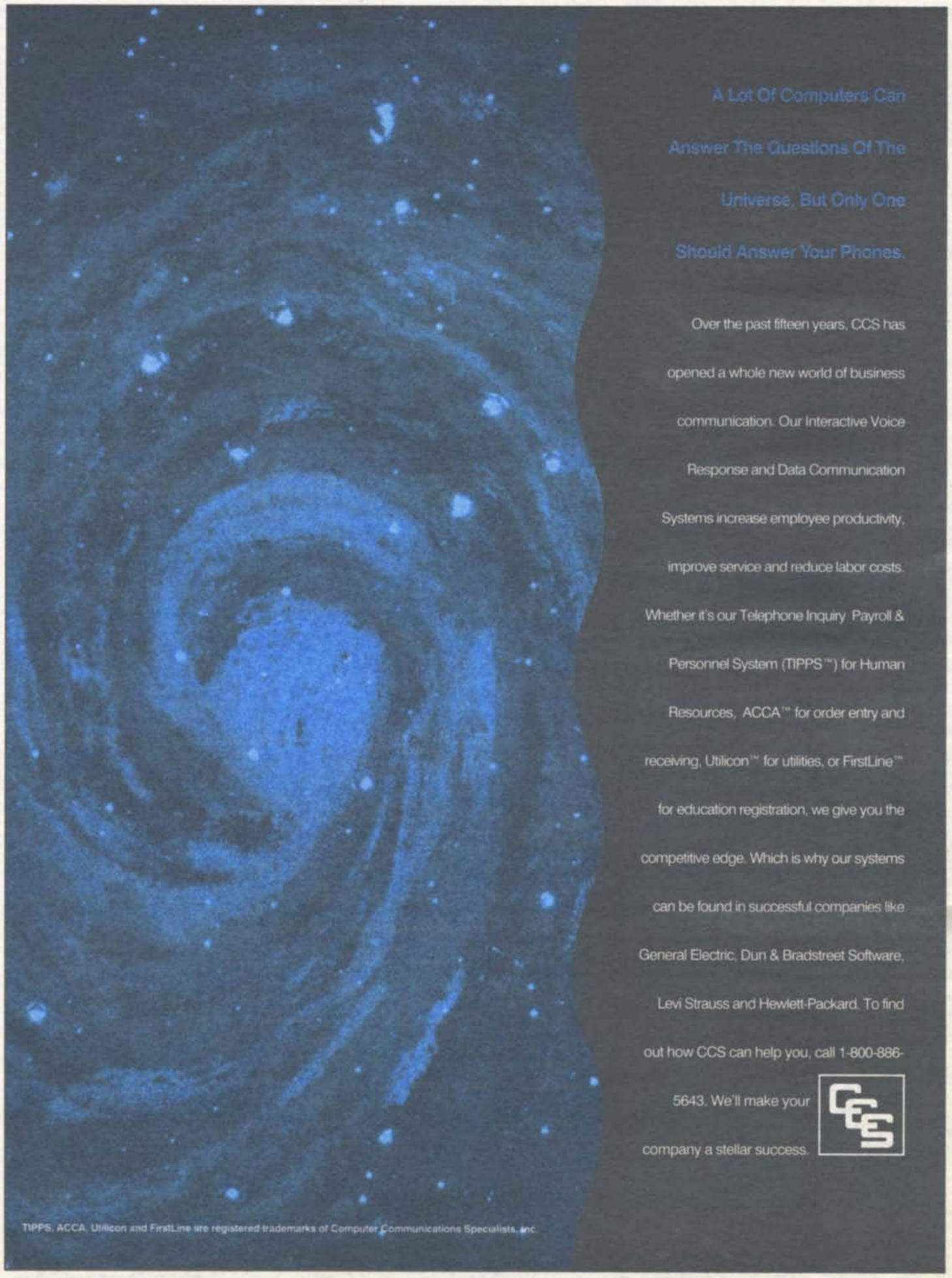
What I find most intriguing about *The Simple Times*—apart from the high level of technical information—is the distribution mechanism. Sure, you can get paper if you want. Just contact your local SNMP vendor.

Most people, however, will choose to get the standards on-line. Send electronic mail to st-subscriptions@simple-times.org. You'll get back instructions on how to subscribe and how to get back-issues. The whole subscription and distribution process is automated, minimizing the overhead needed to run the magazine.

Electronic subscriptions are available in either PostScript or the new multimedia Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions format. In either case, the data is simply mailed to you, where you can view it on-line or print it on a PostScript printer. Making the data available using electronic mail means that virtually anyone can get the publication.

We need more publications like *The Simple Times*. There are not enough people who develop new protocols that spend adequate time telling others about it. *The Simple Times* is the icing on the cake. ■

CARL MALAMUD is writing Exploring the Internet: A Technical Travelogue, *a book that will be featured as The Interop Book at Interop Fall. The opinions expressed are his own.*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